

COINS

Mint boss tags 'official' labels as misleading

By Roger Boye

Despite appearances to the contrary, companies that sell "official government coins to U.S. citizens" are in no way affiliated with Uncle Sam, warns Mrs. Donna Pope, director of the Mint.

She said her office has received many queries about businesses that peddle coins through flashy newspaper ads or in huge mail-order campaigns. Casual readers sometimes think the companies are part of the government because of clever promotions.

Catchphrases in advertisements, such as "special public offering," "truly rare coins hidden for generations" or "historic mementos," mislead many would-be investors.

To identify items being sold by the

government's official mint, look for the words "Bureau of the Mint" on the order forms, she suggested in a statement published by the hobby newspaper Coin World.

Coins offered by private companies "no doubt have been procured on the open market," she added.

● Collectors have until mid-March to order the government's 1981 gold medallions featuring authors Mark Twain and Willa Cather.

Order forms and instructions are available at post offices, and price information for the 1-ounce and half-ounce medals may be obtained by calling, toll-free, 800-368-5510.

● The U.S. government isn't alone in revamping its 1-cent coin this year.

By spring, Canadian citizens should begin finding a 12-sided penny dated 1982 in circulation. The new coin will be slightly larger than the round Canadian cent made in past years, but the metal composition will be the same—copper mixed with tiny amounts of zinc and tin.